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SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR A/S JOHNSON'S JAN 10-11 VISIT TO
LEBANON

11. (SBU) Summary: U.S. Embassy Beirut welcomes your January 10-11 visit as one of the first high-level visits to Lebanon of 2010. As Lebanon emerges from a six-month struggle to form a new national unity government, your meeting with Interior Minister Ziad Baroud will reinforce the message that the U.S. is committed to supporting Lebanon's state institutions and the new government. Our robust U.S. assistance programs aim to strengthen state institutions, promote economic growth, support education, and build civil society. Your visit to Lebanon will show continued U.S. support for Lebanon's sovereignty and stability, in addition to highlighting the state's obligation to exert control over all of its territory. Your meeting with Baroud will provide an opportunity to evaluate current INL programs in Lebanon and discuss new possibilities, such as anti-narcotics assistance and border control training. You will also attend a police graduation ceremony, meet with senior police officers, discuss regional UNDP anti-corruption programs, and interface with INL contractors. End Summary.

NEW UNITY GOVERNMENT BASED ON CONSENSUS

12. (SBU) The new Prime Minister, Saad Hariri, was able to form a cabinet in December after nearly six months of negotiations only after he granted the opposition key concessions. Although the contentious cabinet negotiations weakened the March 14 coalition and strengthened those allied with Syria and Iran, most Lebanese leaders appear to be seeking a period of calm after years of tumult following former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri's assassination and the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon.

KEY U.S. OBJECTIVES: INSTITUTION-BUILDING, REGIONAL STABILITY

13. (SBU) Strengthening Lebanese state institutions has been and continues to be the primary U.S. objective in Lebanon. The U.S. has committed over \$1 billion in security assistance to the military and police since 2005 in order to help them extend their control over all Lebanese territory, including those areas dominated by Hizballah. President Obama underscored this vision by emphasizing the importance of controlling arms smuggling into Lebanon during President Michel Sleiman's recent visit to Washington. On the civilian side, USAID manages robust programs targeting the judicial, educational, and agricultural sectors. The embassy also promotes civil society development and supports various initiatives targeting institutional reform through the Middle East Partnership Initiative and other USG programs.

14. (SBU) Your visit is an opportunity to reaffirm U.S. support for security reform in Lebanon and our ongoing commitment to the various Lebanon-related UN Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR), such as UNSCRs 1559 and 1701, that call for extending the state's control over all its territory. Existing INL programs in Lebanon train and equip the Internal

Security Forces (ISF), and we are ready to explore new initiatives that will strengthen Lebanon's ability to control its borders. The new government has not clearly defined its strategy for the Common Border Force (CBF), and your visit will offer a chance to urge progress on the CBF and indicate our interest in supporting it through training and equipment.

CURRENT INL PROGRAMS A SUCCESS

15. (SBU) Our assistance program to the ISF, totaling \$64 million over the last three years, has raised public respect for the institution, increased its professionalism, and built its capacity to gradually expand its operations into Hizballah-controlled areas and Palestinian refugee camps. This year's INL program will total \$20 million, and the budget request for 2012 is \$30 million. We met our commitment to train 8,000 new ISF cadets at the ISF academy, and we are also training hundreds of supervisors while developing an in-service training program for the 16,000 deployed ISF officers who have not passed through our cadet programs.

16. (SBU) We have focused, in particular, on helping the ISF develop its presence in the Nahr Al-Barid Palestinian camp, which was completely destroyed in a battle between terrorists and the Lebanese security forces in 2007. As part of this effort, we have offered intensive community policing training for the ISF contingent that will police the camp. We are also evaluating tenders for a police station in the area adjacent to the camp, and we expect to break ground by March.

17. (SBU) On the equipment side, we have provided the ISF over 480 vehicles, refurbished 45 armored personnel carriers, and fully equipped over 4000 ISF cadets with uniforms and non-lethal equipment. This year, we will also start upgrading the ISF communications system, since ISF officers in the field -- who do not have access to a secure communications network -- communicate via cell phone. This upgrade will take several years and cost up to \$50 million.

BAROUD RETAINS THE INTERIOR MINISTRY

18. (SBU) Ziad Baroud, a popular independent affiliated with President Sleiman, returned in the new cabinet as Interior Minister. Your meeting with Baroud, under whom the ISF falls, will provide an opportunity to evaluate current INL programs and discuss additional ways in which INL can assist the Lebanese security forces. We are especially interested in enhancing the ability of the ISF to expand its operations and authority in areas where its presence is historically weak, such as regions dominated by Hizballah and in the Palestinian refugee camps. Possible ways to achieve this goal are providing anti-narcotics programs (including eradication support) in the Biqa' Valley and expanding policing in the Palestinian camps using the Nahr Al-Barid model. We could also consider developing a training program for the CBF, nominally headed by the ISF, once the GOL develops its border strategy.

OTHER EVENTS

19. (SBU) You will speak at the graduation ceremony for three ISF classes, and the event will be covered by the press. Your presence at this event will demonstrate U.S. commitment to a professional and proficient ISF and answer common criticisms of our motives for supporting it. You may also meet the six ISF generals who recently completed a two-week study tour of community policing practices in the U.S. They will explain how the ISF intends to implement community policing practices nationwide, not just in Nahr Al-Barid. Your meeting with the over 40 U.S. and 80 local contractors supporting the INL program will allow you to thank them for their service and hear their perspectives. We also look forward to discussing UNDP regional anti-corruption programs

during your visit, as well as meeting with the donor community on border security issues.
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